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PROGRESS OF INDONESIAN RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM IN 1952

[This report gives details on the progress and difficulties of the Indonesian resettlement program during 1952. The major movement is to Sumatra and Borneo, especially to South Sumatra. The plans of the Transmigration Service and the CTM (Corps Tjandangan Nasional, National Reserve Corps) to redistribute the Indonesian population have been greatly hampered by insufficient government funds.]

Tambunan Cites Food Shortage

At a recent Djakarta conference, Tambunan, chief of the Transmigration Service, made the following statements concerning the necessity for the redistribution of the population in Indonesia:

"If the total arable land in Java of some 8 million hectares were equally divided among the 40 million people who make a living in agriculture, each family of five would get only 2 hectares of land. Security disturbances and hunger cannot possibly be prevented in Java under such circumstances." *K*

"The Indonesian archipelago contains 1,900,000 square kilometers, but only Java, with 132,000 square kilometers has reached anything near its maximum agricultural production. The Indonesian government is obliged to import more than half a million tons of food annually to feed the population. Since there is an annual population increase in Indonesia of 1,200,000, imports must increase unless there is a corresponding agricultural expansion.

"During periods such as World War II, communications with the outside world are so broken that imports cease. Therefore, with the current international tension, it is even more important to find a solution to the food problem." (1)

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Government Assistance

The Indonesian government has employed the following credit procedures to assist the resettlement program: (1) provision of houses and equipment to the migrants, which has, up to now, cost the government 8,000 rupiahs per family; (2) provision of construction materials only to the migrants, which has, up to now, cost the government 5,000 rupiahs per family; and (3) provision by the migrants themselves of their own houses and equipment, with the government granting 2,000 rupiahs per family.

Government funds spent on building homes must be repaid but the terms are generous. For instance, the migrant is not required to pay taxes for the first 3 years. Each family receives 2 hectares of land, and it is estimated that the yield of one hectare (about 20 quintals of paddy rice), sold on the present market, would easily pay off an 8,000 rupiah debt in 6 years.(2)

CTN Accomplishments

According to Lt Col Omon Abdurachman, director of the CTN, (Corps Tjandangan Nasional, National Reserve Corps), resettlement could be an excellent solution for the employment of 33,000 former members of the army who were released due to army reorganization. However, although 7,200 ex-service men have gone to South Sumatra and Borneo, most of the men prefer to remain in their place of birth. For instance, out of 9,101 ex-service men in East Java, only 3,649 have gone to other localities.(3)

According to the Java Bode, ex-servicemen and their families, totaling 10,414 persons, chiefly from West Java, have been sent to the Lampung area of Sumatra; and 400 families of ex-servicemen have been sent from Minahasa to Dumogo in the North Celebes. The same issue of this newspaper reported that 2,377 persons, mainly from Central Java, have been sent to the Lampung area by the CTN, and 5,006 from West, Central, and East Java to Borneo.(4)

According to Abdurachman, efforts to make the people land conscious have been quite successful. The government will provide agricultural machinery, such as tractors and bulldozers, as well as instruction in their proper use. Every group will have road-building, reclamation, agricultural and construction units assigned to it. It is expected that very shortly, such units, supplied with modern equipment, will be sent wherever their services are required.

Lieutenant Colonel Abdurachman said that a central sawmill to provide lumber for housing has been erected at Bandjermasin, Borneo, which is operated by the CTN men themselves. Other sawmills will be established in Pontianak and Samarinda.

He said one of the most serious problems in Borneo is that of determining land ownership rights, which the government has not yet defined. There was a good deal of trouble because the CTN people worked the land, and were then accused of encroaching on the property of others. People in Borneo have lived nomadic lives so that land once cultivated and then abandoned has reverted to forest. The pamong pradja (civil government) cannot solve this problem of land ownership by invoking the Kepela Adat (Common Law), since specific agrarian laws are required.

Abdurachman said that for 1952, the CTN requested an appropriation of 122 million rupiahs, but only 26 million were granted because of the national deficit. This cut will necessarily restrict CTN activities.(3)

According to a report by Captain Soegondo, CTN inspector, the Widjajakusuma CTN company of 303 members, which settled in Borneo, has cleared 30 hectares of land for cultivation and 15 hectares for truck gardening. A 6-kilometer-long road has been constructed, two bridges, and 102 temporary houses have been built. Work on 16 other bridges is under way.

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The Widjajakusuma company was originally sent out with the following equipment: one truck, one motorcycle, one typewriter, one power saw, and administrative supplies. The company itself purchased the following additional equipment: 25 bicycles, 3 power saws, one generator set, 2 wagons, 2 oxen, and 3 water buffalos. The Widjajakusuma company has a reserve capital of 96,500 rupiahs.(5)

Service Allocations Termed Insufficient

Tambunan, chief of the Transmigration Service, stated that his office was allocated only 3 million rupiahs for 1951, which merely covered the expense of moving 3,000 persons to South Sumatra, 100 to the Celebes, and 400 to Banten [West Java]. He added that the Transmigration Service has done enough planning to proceed with resettlement on a large scale, but government financial support is still needed.(1)

The Minister of Social Affairs, Anwar Tjokroaminoto, claimed that the government allocated only 3,500,000 rupiahs for the resettlement program in 1951.(6)

Tambunan asked the Minister of Social Affairs if under the restricted financial aid, it might not be better to dissolve the Transmigration Service, thus saving 1,500,000 rupiahs annually in salaries. To this, Minister Tjokroaminoto replied: "To permit the Transmigration Service to be dissolved would be equivalent to permitting Indonesians to be murdered."(1)

Editorial comment on this statement said that Indonesians would also be murdered if the Transmigration Service could not do any more than it is at present.(7)

According to H. M. Munawar, resettlement under the auspices of the Bureau of National Reconstruction has been largely to the area of North and South Sumatra.(8)

Difficulties Facing Migrants

According to Munawar, the problems of migrants in South Sumatra generally stem from the unfriendly attitude of the original inhabitants and lack of communications. In Bengkulu, for instance, the new settlers are experiencing difficulties mainly because the Central Transmigration Office has not yet built a road system in this region. The big problems in Tugu Muljo are irrigation and lack of equipment.(9)

Munawar has further stated that the disputes which arose in Kemumu, South Sumatra, from the hostile attitude of the inhabitants toward the migrants are being avoided in Belitang South Sumatra, by the erection of fences between the new settlers and the area inhabited by the original residents.

Munawar said that since the settlers in Belitang do not produce enough food for their needs, nearby villages such as Semendawai Suku II, Semendawai Suku III, Madang I, and Madang II have largely been converted to rice paddy cultivation to supply the Belitang area. Unfortunately, only one fifth of the land under cultivation in this area is irrigated by canals, but if prewar irrigation were restored, the Belitang resettlement area would yield a large amount of foodstuffs, including rice and a second crop.

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Munawar said that it was surprising to find that dual administration existed in the Belitang area. Besides the tjamat (subdistrict head) for the Belitang resettlement area, there is also a tjamat for Muntjak Kabau. This latter official was appointed after the return of the Republican government, while the Belitang tjamat was never removed. Since the ketjamatan (subdistrict) of Muntjak Kabau still has no definite status, the resulting situation is confusing. According to Munawar, it is hoped that the government will no longer permit two subdistrict heads to function in the same place, as such divided authority works a hardship on the people. He added that up to now, there is no apparent improvement in the resettlement in South Sumatra.(8)

On the other hand, Minister Tjokroaminoto stated upon his return from a visit to South Sumatra that he had a favorable impression of the situation there.(6)

Munawar also said that at first the Kemumu area, showed progress in agriculture but that retrogression is now evident. He said that this is not encouraging, considering the large amount of reclaimed land in that region.(9)

Munawar further stated that it was rather strange that the new settlers in South Sumatra were short of food, although they produced some 10 tons of paddy rice in one year. Their efforts seem to be futile because the idjon system /usurious system of preharvest credit extension/ is still practiced extensively among the new settlers in general and particularly in the Lampung and Tugu Hardjo areas of South Sumatra. Consequently, while the total yearly production of paddy rice is large, the new settlers do not prosper. The only ones who profit are a group of capitalists who have granted loans under the idjon system. Consequently, it has become usual for the farmers to go elsewhere after the harvest to seek other occupations. Up to now, the government has done nothing to remedy this situation.

Munawar said that attempts are being made in every resettlement area under government supervision to store rice in barns, but the people do not ration themselves properly, so that when a shortage develops, reserve rice is withdrawn for consumption.

Munawar further stated that it is again being rumored that the government will extend bank credit so that the settlers will not have to use the idjon system. However, even this plan will fail because the idjon system is actually not as much the reason for the failure to store rice as the fault of the people themselves. They are very improvident and leave their fields at harvest time to attend festivals, plays, and dances.

In conclusion, Munawar made the following suggestions: (a) prospective settlers must be fully informed about the region they intend to inhabit; (b) they must be moved in an orderly fashion to areas where there is work for them; (c) they should be educated in habits of economy; (d) the idjon credit system must be forbidden and replaced by an equally quick method of obtaining loans.(8)

Darsosintono Makes Proposals

S. Darsosintono, former colonization chief during the colonial period, offered the following suggestions for an efficient resettlement program for Indonesia.

"Resettlement does not require voluminous reports, futile debates, or numerous committees. Immediate action is needed and the minimum requirements are as follows: government financial and technical aid, moral support from the public, capable and honest leadership, and settlers who are willing to work and stand hardship.

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"Dr Schacht, the German economist who recently went to Indonesia as an economic consultant, suggested that the first steps toward a resettlement program are to build roads, to organize communications, and to coordinate the Preparatory Administrative Agency for Transmigration (Koordinasi Badan Pen-jelenggara Transmigrasi).

"The term 'communications' includes the transportation of settlers and their belongings, and the capacity to remove lumber cleared from the jungle. In 1938, the absence of communications was keenly felt when land was opened at Way Sekampung in the Lampung area. The jungles of Sumatra can provide millions of cubic meters of lumber, which during the colonial period could not be moved because there were no good roads.

"Resettlement requires a hardy and competent leader to organize and direct the clearing of the jungle and the building of homes. The leader must share the good and bad with his people and should not live apart from them. He must know their daily needs and give them moral support, particularly when homesickness causes dissatisfaction. Prospective migrants should be told of the difficulties they face, and high-sounding slogans should be avoided.

"Settlers must be temporarily grouped in one place and provided with food and lodging, and it would be well to have temporary quarters constructed in the jungle before they arrive. Construction of these quarters can be given to contractors who know how to use jungle lumber, thatch, and lalang grass.

"Manual agricultural implements are necessary, but projects in Malaya and the Philippines have shown the need and practicality of tractors. The jungle should be cleared and the soil tilled before the settlers arrive. However, planting, weeding, and harvesting should be done by the settlers themselves.

"The granting and administration of subsidies should be simplified, and unnecessary paper work eliminated. Such financial assistance can be discontinued after 2 years, if the settlements are self-sufficient by that time. Dr Schacht advised that bureaucracy be reduced to a minimum and that one ministry is sufficient to handle resettlement."(10)

Preparations for Future

The Agricultural Bureau has begun to clear some 2,500 hectares of fertile, malaria-free land around Simpangampat, Kinali, and other places in the Pasaman Regency of West Sumatra. This land is intended for about 500 families from Java who were settled in Baru, West Sumatra. They will be transferred to this land because the land in Baru is not suitable for cultivation, and the water supply there is inadequate.(11)

Under a new government-sponsored program, the first group consisting of 200 families from Jogjakarta will settle in Summersari, near the Metro area in the Central Lampung Regency of Sumatra. It is expected that during the current year, 2,100 families or four or five members each will be sent out, in addition to 1,300 families to Lampung, 300 to Palembang and 500 to Tjibaliung in Banten, Sumatra.(2) [It is not clear whether or not these are in addition to those reported by the Java Bode on 21 August.]

The movement of Ambon residents to Ceram is being planned by the authorities as a step toward the solution of unemployment and the shortage of housing in Ambon. The government will provide land, housing (for a limited period of time), medical services and materials for soil cultivation.(12)

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Since the importance of land reclamation has become fully recognized, the Economic and Finance Office has decided to organize a Land Reclamation Office. Clearing the land is a problem which requires capital and initiative, since very little can be done with the present primitive methods of operation. The possibilities of establishing industries, such as roof-tile factories to be operated by the new settlers, are under consideration.(2)

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